

Shively Labs

Where FM Radio Antennas Are Not Just a Sideline

I remember fondly, my first experience with Shively Labs. I was building a 100kW station in Colorado and, unhappy with other antenna manufacturers, the equipment dealer I was working with suggested Shively, and put me in touch with Bob Surette. Bob and I discussed my tower selection, and other pertinent information, and then he computer-modeled my options to get the best coverage.

Back then, the Internet wasn't in existence, so Bob faxed me potential coverage patterns, and we discussed which pattern would be best for my needs. Thanks to Bob's efforts, we ended up with the strongest signal around – where it counted. Back then, I believed that Bob *was* Shively Labs. Like you, I now know better.

I soon learned that Shively was a company with many people working tirelessly, with an eye on quality, to produce excellent FM antennas – and only FM antennas. So now it is time to open the doors and take a peek behind them – and meet some of the men and women who, along with Bob, have dedicated themselves to us FM radio broadcasters.



Bob Surette, Paul Westcott and David Allen (L to R) at Paul's retirement cook out in September.

A Solid Lineage

It will come as a surprise that, like Bob, most Shively employees have been with the company over the long haul. Just recently, for example, after more than thirty years with the company, the President of Shively Labs, Paul Westcott, retired. While for decades, the names Shively Labs and Bob Surette have been synonymous, Paul has had his hand on the tiller, keeping Shively Labs on a steady course of growth, and development.

Paul was replaced by David Allen, himself a company veteran of 29 years. Longevity and stability are just two words which aptly describe Shively Labs, a company that boasts employees in place well over thirty years, with centuries of collective broadcast engineering experience in both the domestic and international markets.

Bob Surette is, of course, the majority contributor to those centuries of engineering experience, having been with the company since the early days of Ed Shively. Bob worked alongside Ed, starting back in 1974 as a very young, engineering graduate. He learned Ed's philosophy regarding patterns and the nuances of pattern adjustment.

Past, Present and Future

For those of us who don't know the entire history of Shively, it was founded back in 1963 by Ed Shively, a pioneering engineer in the newly growing field of circularly polarized FM broadcast antennas. Shively Labs has been at the forefront of the industry ever since, dedicated solely to FM Radio broadcasting.

Ed understood early on, that signal coverage was essential to the growth of every station, and being somewhat dissatisfied with the efforts of his former employer, he set out on his own. Ed developing a unique line of ring-stub radiators which remain some of the most sophisticated FM antennas on the market today. With a strong emphasis on antenna pattern purity and development, Ed's radiators favored symmetry and electrical balance, and they still dominate the industry as a directional antenna of choice.

A Transition to a Bright Future

In 1980, Shively Labs was purchased by Howell Laboratories Inc., which was managed by their still relatively new president of three years, Paul Wescott. While Howell was already focused on the design and manufacture of equipment for the United States Navy, Paul recognized that the manufacturing methods, the design requirements and even the materials used for the Navy gear, were very complimentary for both companies. While admittedly completely different product lines, they must both survive for decades in very hostile environments. Both needed to be resistant to shock, vibration, hot, cold, corrosion, and have a minimum maintenance requirement.

Since Paul's historic decision thirty-one years ago, Shively has been an integral part of Howell Laboratories, sharing the same U.S. Navy certified welders, machinists and assemblers that continue to provide systems of the highest quality installed on every Navy ship in the fleet. Shively Labs and its parent company Howell Laboratories converted to an Employee Stock Ownership Program (ESOP) in 1995 and for the past sixteen years every single employee has been vested as a part owner of the company.

Evolving Product to Meet Market Needs

Recent years have seen many changes, both to the product line, the very loyal customer base, and of course to the people which make up Shively Labs. Several years ago, Shively expanded its line of filters to cater to the lower power markets from 500 Watts through 10 kW, and the company continues to innovate and improve upon those products which are among the most compact combiners/filters available anywhere. It also introduced its own line of coaxial components from 7/8-inch through 6-1/8 inch. These products are available both as components or incorporated within Shively's many different combining and antenna systems.

Several years ago, Shively added the popular and highly efficient Model 6017 (Lindenblad) array to the traditional line of side-mount and broadband panel radiators. Since then, additional broadband antenna solutions have been added in response to demand. A new model of

new high power, circularly polarized antennas will soon be introduced to serve its growing international focus. The stable theme though, is the line of antennas originally developed by Ed Shively, which offer the same excellent performance that Ed strived for in the sixties – if it works this well, why try to "fix" it. Shively's products provide a level of understated performance, and what they advertise is exactly what you will get. To quote one former customer-turned employee: "Shively was always a pleasure to work with. If they promised a level of performance, you knew that it would be achieved in practice. You just felt confident that you were making the right decision."

Strong Customer Base

Shively's customers, both at home and abroad, have always been intensely loyal, and that loyalty is now expanding to include more international markets including the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Middle East. At home, Shively has been very active helping a large number of educational and religious broadcasters achieve their needs, especially at the lower power levels. They really do approach each sale as the beginning of a lifelong relationship. Shively takes to heart each and every customer concern, and genuinely cares about finding the right solution.



Thumbs up by the crew after a successful installation of an antenna and combiner system in Dubai. Matt Smith and Martyn Gregory are in the center.

Solid Corporate Foundation

With so many very long-standing employees, retirements have been a very infrequent occurrence at Shively Labs – until a few years ago. Since then, two long-standing and well-known sales managers, Joe "BJ" Rohrer and Edd Forke have been ably superseded by Dale Ladner and Jon Clark, both of whom were formerly with Shively in the nineties, and both of whom spent time with various competitors before returning once again. Dale and Jon collectively add more than 50 years of experience. Shively's mechanical design team comprises similar experience.

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Cover Story

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Dennis Butterfield, Alan Plummer and Mark Cotton are responsible for product mechanical design and drafting with a combined experience of over half a century between them.



Sean Edwards tuning an FM filter.

The Sales Department

Angela Gillespie is currently the “youngest” member of the Shively sales force, joining the company in 2005. Before joining sales, her background was in mechanical design with both Dielectric and with Passive Power Products and subsequently, Andrew Corporation.

In 2006, Adam Jones, PE, joined the company from RFS and previously, Dielectric Communications, to head up mechanical engineering and design. He has subsequently taken over the direction of company-wide operations and manufacturing.

2007 saw the addition of Martyn Gregory as Vice President, after several years with Crown Castle Corporation and Richland Towers. Prior to moving to the U.S., he was with the British Broadcasting Corporation for twenty years, specializing initially in transmitter engineering and subsequently in antenna and RF systems.

Also in 2007, Sean Edwards was promoted to the position of Test and Development Engineer, and has since been intimately involved with the design of new products and the improvement of many of the legacy products offered by Shively.

In 2008, Matt Smith joined the company as an RF Technician. Smith joined Jeff Allen, to fill Sean’s shoes, and since then, he has expanded his field service capabilities as far afield as the United Arab Emirates, and off the shores of Haiti, while working on Howell equipment on board the USS Carl Vinson, CVN 70.

Back to Bob

Bob Surette has held his position for over thirty years. In that time, he has helped thousands of broadcasters (including me) achieve the coverage they need, and

he continues to hand out engineering advice and recommendations, based upon decades of experience and hands-on engineering. Among so many veteran employees at Shively Labs, Bob insists that, while he has mellowed a lot since his early days, he has no intention of retiring for at least another several years.

It is comforting to know that, together with Peter Long, who runs Shively’s recently enlarged and modernized antenna pattern range, Bob will be taking care of broadcasters’ coverage needs for many years to come. It is also a comfort knowing that, when he does finally retire, there will be a solid staff to step in and continue with the same attention to pattern detail that Ed Shively had when he founded the company – and that he passed on to Bob.

The Coverage You Want, Where You Need It

In the early days, Bob and Ed Shively would develop antenna patterns in what he affectionately refers to as the “outhouse.” It was literally just that, a converted wooden outhouse building, which had been attached to a traditional Maine summer camp cottage; the camp itself became a storage facility. While the “outhouse” disappeared many years ago, the camp portion of that original test range facility was finally demolished last year. In its place, a new, larger, custom-built facility provides Peter and Bob with all the capabilities they need to develop the most complex of antenna patterns, perform the measurements, and verify that performance complies with a new Construction Permit.

But there is a down side to the demolition of the old camp. The one thing now missing from Shively’s new pattern test facility is – you guessed it – an “outhouse.” But that won’t effect your antenna pattern.

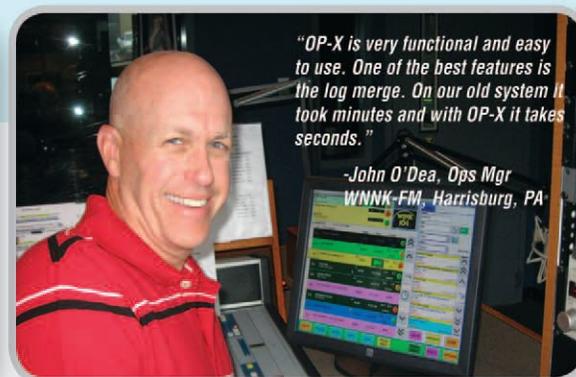
For more information about Shively antennas, visit their web site www.shively.com Give them at call 888-744-5389 or email: sales@shively.com

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